

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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The wrong tool for the job

The Bible is too complicated to be used effectively in secular arguments

Abortion, capital punishment, child discipline, homosexuality — no matter the topic, it is likely that Bible scripture is used to argue both sides of the issue. Unfortunately, the Bible does not prove to be the final answer in these problems due to its complexity. Whether writing speeches, debating among friends or discussing public policy, using biblical quotes does little to support a secular thesis.



RICHARD BRAY

Because the Bible provides moral messages through the telling of stories, its words can be easily misinterpreted. An even greater difficulty is the existence of apparent contradictions within the texts. Dr. Henry Morris, author of "Many Infallible Proofs; Evidences for the Christian Faith," says the Bible contains many alleged complications that present difficulties for the reader.

For example, in the New International Version of the Bible, Exodus 21:12 says "anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death." However, Romans 12:17 and Matthew 5:39 say one evil should not be repaid with another. It could be argued that these verses mean one should not enact vengeance, but should allow the community to do so. However, as the community comprises individuals, it is difficult to understand where the line is drawn. A juror who gives a verdict in favor of the death penalty would still be violating Romans 12:17 and Matthew 5:39 while following the guidance of Exodus 21:12.

Morris points to another example in which the Bible was used to unjustly execute Galileo, who was executed for his belief that the Earth revolved around the sun. In convicting Galileo of heresy, the Church pointed to 1 Chronicles 16:30, which says "the world is firmly established; it cannot be moved," and Psalms 104:5, which says, "He set the Earth on its foundations, it can

never be moved." In context, these words might mean that the ways of the world cannot be changed. However, when taken literally, this text can prove very difficult to understand.

Difficulties such as these make the Bible a poor choice to substantiate secular arguments such as capital punishment and abortion. Both sides can use the same collection of texts to support vastly different, and oftentimes opposing, views. These difficulties in understanding the Bible's meaning explain why some scholars donate so much of their time to studying the Bible.

Perhaps part of the trouble with the Bible is the numerous translations the book has undergone. "The Alpha and the Omega" by Jim Cornwell lists 11 different versions of the Bible which have been translated into English and alludes to there being others of lesser significance. Morris says these translations can also cause confusion. In his book, he points to seven different variations between the King James Version of the Bible and the New International Version which change the meanings of the verses and can create confusion for the reader.

To overcome these challenges, individuals who use the Bible to support their views on the world's myriad troubles must be well-versed in biblical scripture to fully understand the Bible's message. This is not to say that the Bible does not contain important messages, or that it is not a work that deserves our close critique. But when trying to convince others on a secular issue, citing the Bible only opens a debate about biblical interpretation that does little to convince opponents.

Richard Bray is a senior journalism major.



JEFF SMITH • THE BATTALION

Company should not edit films for content

Clean Flicks provides family-friendly films but infringes on filmmakers' rights

Clean Flicks, a Utah-based corporation, has taken up the role of janitor in the movie industry — it takes R-rated, PG-13 rated and even PG rated movies and edit them until they are clean enough for a five-year-old to watch. The theme is catching on: 64 locations have sprung up virtually overnight in 15 states. There seems to be a growing market for the film-editing services Clean Flicks offers, and yet there also seems to be something inherently wrong with what Clean Flicks and its affiliates do to these movies.



CHRIS JACKSON

Indeed, families may want to watch *Saving Private Ryan* without the extreme violence, and that is understandable. Parents may want their kids to enjoy *Titanic* without seeing more of Kate Winslet than necessary, and that is reasonable. Situations such as these point to a hole in the home video market that needs to be filled. They do not, however, call for individuals to come running with the moral mop. Clean Flicks violates artistic integrity and, arguably, the law while making a killing in the family movie market.

Clean Flicks and its affiliates make money off other people's artwork after it has been molded into a form that the artist did not intend. Such tampering betrays the artist's original vision of the film. *LA Confidential* director Curtis Hanson likens these actions to high crime. In an interview, he told CNBC News that "to alter these (productions) and then put them out with our names still on the product is not only fraud,

but it's artistic rape."

Hanson's stance may be somewhat extreme, but it highlights the emotion involved between directors and their works of art. Ernest Hemingway once said to his editor that no changes, not even a word, were to be made to his writing without his expressed written consent, because "the stories are written so tight and so hard that the alteration of a word can throw an entire story out of key." In the same way, it is possible to throw an entire film out of key by the removal of one part, even if that part is objectionable to some.

Artistic integrity is one reason Clean Flicks should not be allowed to continue shining up the Hollywood movie scene. The more concrete reason, however, is a legal one. In late August, Clean Flicks filed a pre-emptive lawsuit asking permission from the courts to continue its practice. The Director's Guild of America (DGA) is expected to file a countersuit.

When it does file suit, Findlaw.com's Julie Hilden says the DGA has grounds for legal action on three fronts. A court could find that Clean Flicks violates copyright law by overstepping its bounds for using the material by editing it before renting it. The DGA could also argue that Clean Flicks' actions violate trademark laws because it advertises the original studio affiliations and catch phrases for the films, even though the original film is not being sold. A weaker case could be made for false advertising, though the DGA would need to prove that Clean Flicks changed the film so much that it could not be identified as the product it once was.

Some would claim, though, that all these things have already

been done. Studios tailor their movies for specific audiences, according to a September article in the *Christian Science Monitor*. Some movies are edited for television and some are tamed to be used as in-flight movies for airlines. For sensitive overseas markets, films are edited to fit the local tastes. Studios edit some violence for European markets and get rid of the sex scenes and nudity for Islamic nations. The key difference in these situations, however, is that editing for TV, the airlines, and sensitive overseas areas is done with permission from the studio that produced the movie. In doing so, these changes become just as high a crime as anything else Clean Flicks might do to a movie.

Clean Flicks may be committing "artistic rape," but at least its showing family-friendly programming. There is a real market ready and willing to consume these edited Hollywood products, even if the companies who offer them aren't artistically sensitive. The sheer fact that this type of film editing is a problem in the first place is evidence that at least some people want cleaner movies and are willing to take action to get them. Hollywood directors and producers are missing out on a growing market, while Clean Flicks violates the artistic integrity of their films — they're losing on both fronts. Hollywood directors would do well to edit their movies on their own. By firing the janitor, they could make a little money and clean up the marketplace at the same time.

Chris Jackson is a junior information and operations management major.

MAIL CALL

Administrator salaries should reflect demands of the position

In response to Jennifer Lozano's Oct. 4 column:

If it is true that top A&M administrators are overpaid, they should be fired and replaced. If faculty or staff members are overpaid, they should be fired and replaced.

Salaries are not designed for the person holding the office, but for the office itself. The salary and prerequisites for the office, for the office of president, of provost, of vice president for this and that, of college dean, of department head, and so on, are established to compensate for the demands of the position.

These jobs are not five-day, 40-hour jobs; they are seven-day, 24-hour jobs, requiring officeholders to be on call around the clock every day, including holidays, and throughout the United States. Moreover, the demands of those jobs are beyond the ability, even the imagination, of the average person.

Texas A&M does not want the average person in such jobs; Texas A&M wants the superior person, the person with the highest qualifications because those jobs are vital to the future of the University.

Don't lament the salary of top officeholders; do what you can to help ensure that only the best people are hired to fill those jobs.

Don't complain that someone is overpaid; complain that you are underpaid. You don't want to decrease someone else's salary; you want to increase your salary.

Keep all this in mind when you go on a job interview and you are asked what salary you

want. You don't know, really, but what you want is no less than what the job pays.

Douglas Perret Starr
Professor of Journalism

Professor Bonilla-Silva's book applied to A&M's diversity issue

In response to Matthew Maddox's Oct. 2 column:

I agree wholeheartedly with Matthew Maddox. Vision 2020 and its plan to increase diversity is the epitome of prejudice.

It gives preferential treatment to students based solely on the color of their skin. Certain departments, if not all of them, tell their advisers and staff to go the extra mile for non-white students, especially for recruitment, and have a whole list of criteria and protocol they have to go through that goes far and above and beyond that which white students receive.

This is one of many Vision 2020 policies to increase diversity. It can be painted with the many colors of the word "diversity," but it's still ugly racism. What if it were not whites getting looked over? What if it were blacks or hispanics or any other race?

This place would be targeted by every civil rights group under the sun. There would be lawsuits and protest galore, and rightly so. They would have every right to protest and scream racism and demand justice for all — and so do we under the present set of circumstances.

Shane Zercher
Class of 2001

It seems Maddox's idea of solving the diversity problem at Texas A&M is to ignore it. It's absurd to think the problem will fix itself. Maddox quoted Bonilla-Silva as saying "whites develop a set of social practices and an ideology to maintain the advantages that they receive." Bonilla-Silva is referring to the fact that intricate laws to keep whites in power have replaced blatant racism of the past. There are countless examples of this. If you aren't familiar with the idea you should take care to further your education on the subject.

The advantage whites hold is possession of the most money, the best education and more rights than anyone. They know this power can't be taken away. Minorities are not afforded such a luxury. And so long as this is a public institution, it is the responsibility of the school to maintain that the minority is protected.

If you truly believe A&M should do nothing to diversify itself, then would you trade places with a black person and walk a mile in his shoes? You don't have to "think about racism too much" because you live in a white world.

Gabe McNatt
Class of 2003

Dr. Bonilla-Silva, in essence, argues that to be white is to be automatically guilty. Guilty of something you couldn't control. Guilty of crimes you never committed. In what must be his attempt to right numerous past wrongs, he argues that white people should be brought down in order to lift non-whites up. The University has decided to undertake an affirmative action policy under the name of Vision 2020

by actively pursuing non-white students. Maddox, though, argues that we should turn a blind eye to a person's skin color. He asserts that it doesn't matter what shade of skin a person has; it only matters if that person is qualified to be a student or to do his or her job.

Unfortunately, both stances are wrong. Bonilla-Silva makes the classic mistake of tearing one group down to build another group up. It just doesn't work that way and we all know it. Affirmative action and such policies focus on the color of skin and not the content of character. It makes diversity trump ability.

I can without a doubt tell you that my brown skin has nothing to do with how well I do on a test or how well I do my job. My color doesn't affect my mind. Yet, to totally ignore race is to turn a blind eye to history. That cannot be done. The injustices of the past carry on to affect the mindset of today. To ignore a person's ethnicity shown in skin color is to ignore events that could possibly shape that person's worldview. I'm Hispanic. I'm proud of that. Yet, I don't want people only to think of me as Hispanic. I want people to look beneath my skin to see who I am.

Greg Paul
Class of 2003

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